

David Belasco Tells How to Produce a Christmas Entertainment

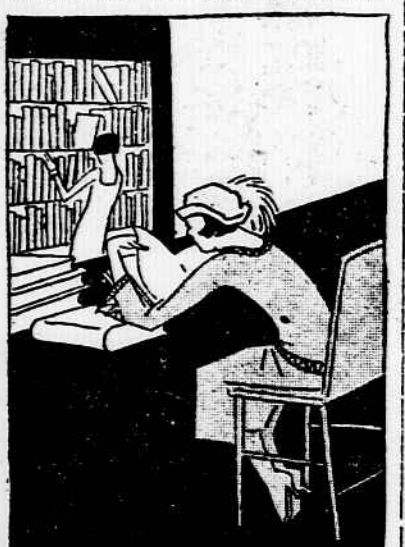
BY DAVID BELASCO.

NO BITTER selection for a Christmas evening's entertainment could be made than an amateur dramatic performance. It affords not only amusement to a large circle of friends, but entertainment and pleasure to the active participants in preparing for the event. It does not necessarily follow that in order to produce a play one must have recourse to professional aid. It is surprising what good results and what really excellent performances can be obtained with a small talent. The task is not onerous, and the rehearsals can be exceedingly jolly, so that it will be considered a pleasant relaxation and assume the gaiety of a social gathering.

I have been asked to give some suggestions which will be of aid to any one desirous of promoting one of these amateur affairs. I shall take it for granted in this article that the entire production will be conducted by those who have never had any theatrical experience. The suggestions offered are given in a general way, but are specific enough to cover the ground.

The first thing to be considered is the selection of a play. That is rather an important point. Do not choose one that has a large cast of characters. The reason for this is evident. Numbers in affairs of this kind create confusion and difficulties which are hard to smooth out. The play should be of a character which will from its subject-matter create interest. I would suggest that a play be selected which does not require extraordinary ability and that is not of a melodramatic nature.

To my mind, the society drama is the safest proposition. There are many in this class which can be presented without a wealth of scenery. I have in mind a play like "Rosemary," "The Liars," "Tyranny of Tears," "Young Mrs. Winthrop," "The Wife," "The Charity Ball." I could name a score more, but merely mention these in order to give the reader an idea of the sort that will be found easy to produce. For the right of musing and will give them intelligi-



IF THE SCENES IN THE PLAY ARE LAID IN THE PAST, CONSULT BOOKS OF REFERENCE.

producing some of these plays a small fee is required. Yet there are many good ones that can be procured at a play bureau for 25 cents.

HAVING selected the play, the next thing to do is to select the cast. Here it is necessary to use good judgment and tact. Be careful to select good players who will accept the parts selected for them without de-

gent consideration. Nothing will cause the affair to assume a half-heartedness so much as one person who is constantly finding fault, thereby breeding dissension. If you would hope to succeed, you must have harmony in your ranks.

And be very careful that the players selected can, by their natural qualifications, lend themselves easily to the parts they will be called upon to portray. For example, the leading woman should be more dignified than the young lady who will assume one of the lesser roles. The gentlemen of the company should look the parts. Having selected the cast, arrangements must be made for the rehearsals.

Before the parts are handed out to each member the play should be intelligently read aloud by the appointed stage manager to the assembled company, who should pay the closest attention. After the reading the parts should be assigned and questions freely asked and discussed as to the characteristics of the parts and play. The time must be set for the next rehearsal, at which each member will read his own part, and the business of entrance, cues and positions on the stage will be taken up. Careful attention must be paid to these mat-

ters, called, in the parlance of the profession, "business." Do not attempt to memorize your part before you begin rehearsals. Wait until two or three rehearsals have passed and you begin to feel easy in the part before you tax your memory. You should know the first act the next day after you have read the first act with the company. And so on, until the entire play has been gone through.

It is not necessary to have more than fourteen rehearsals prior to the production. If you would add your little bit to the pleasure of the affair, be amenable to the rules adopted for the conducting of these rehearsals. Pay close attention to your own part, and listen to the others. Always be ready to pick up your cue. Time can be saved which will hasten the work. Above all things, show consideration for your fellow players by refraining from conversation while they are speaking their lines. Bear in mind that good work on your part, and perhaps on the part of your fellow players, at the public performance is dependent upon the attention you pay to the rehearsals.

THE next thing to consider is the dressing of the parts. If it is a costume play be sure that you are not guilty of an anachronism. Let the costume that you wear be in keeping with the period of the play. The costumes of the time of Louis XIV are just as different from those worn in the period of Louis XVI or the First Consul as are the costumes of the revolutionary or colonial periods from those of the present. There should be unanimity in the selection of the costumes, so far as color and period are concerned, so that they will blend happily.

Care also should be taken in the matter of hats and shoes, as incongruities are liable to arouse derision on the part of your audience. I would advise you, if the scenes of the play selected are laid in the past, to visit libraries and consult books of reference. Many of the histories are illustrated with prints which will be found extremely useful. If, however, the scenes are laid in the present, see that the characters are properly dressed according to the social class to which they belong. If the part represented is a character part, seek out that class in real life or counterpoint, and study the dress and mannerisms.

The next thing to be considered is the stage. If it happens that a regular theater cannot be procured, your ingenuity will be taxed to overcome

AMERICA'S Leading Dramatic Producer Gives Plain and Practical Directions to Amateurs for Staging and Acting a Play Suitable for the Holiday Season. Personal Instruction From "the Wizard of Stagecraft"—Selection of the Play, Assigning the Parts and Appropriate Costumes—Question of Lights.



LET THE COSTUME YOU WEAR BE IN KEEPING WITH THE PLAY.

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this handicap. A platform covering an area of as little space as twelve by fifteen feet, if more room is not obtainable, can be made to serve the purpose. If there is no platform one can be made at a very slight expense. This should be at least three feet above the level of the main floor. A height of at least ten feet can be arranged in the nature of portieres.

The scenes where merely interiors are represented can be made of domestic or some cheap, colored cotton cloth. Some ways of overcoming the lack of scenery are so obvious that I need not make any further suggestions.

The arrangement of lights is the one that requires attention. "Foots" are not indispensable, but when used they should be at least eighteen inches apart, with a reflector back of them, so that the light will be thrown at an angle on the stage. Tin cut floccors, if the effects are to be ambitious, scenery can be produced for amateur affairs by writing to any local theater, the manager of which will, I am sure, give the desired information.

In setting the stage—that is, providing it with proper furniture and decorations—care should be taken to follow the author's suggestions. He wrote the play, consequently his advice should be considered. A reading of the play will suggest what is proper and what is not. A Morris chair in a play where the central figure is none, the flash of lightning, the patter of rain, the swish of waves, the ripple of water, are comparatively easy; as are also the making of shrubbery, foliage, vines, vegetables and fruits. To create the effect of hoof-beats, all that is necessary is two coconut shells and a slab of

THE many little tricks and artifices used in creating effects, such as the hoof-beats of a horse, the rumbling of carriage wheels, the roar and deal of thunder, the flash of lightning, the patter of rain, the swish of waves, the ripple of water, are comparatively easy; as are also the making of shrubbery, foliage, vines, vegetables and fruits. To create the effect of hoof-beats, all that is necessary is two coconut shells and a slab of



AT TOP: THE SWISH OF WAVES CAN BE OBTAINED BY MEANS OF A BARREL WITH A FEW BEANS IN IT. CENTER: SHOOT IN A PAN GIVES THE SOUND OF THE PATTERN OF RAIN. BELOW: A POLE PUSHED ACROSS THE FLOOR GIVES THE SOUND OF A RETREATING CARRIAGE.

necessary that recourse be had to grease paint in order to conform the face to the character presented. The footlights will have a deleterious effect otherwise. To begin with, rub the face thoroughly with cold cream. If this is not obtainable vaseline can be used, or cocoa butter. The cost of a sufficient quantity at a drug store is trifling. After rubbing the face, wipe off the residue with a towel. The next operation is to lay on the flesh tint. This is a stick-paint, of which there are fourteen tints, ranging from No. 1, the lightest, to No. 14, the darkest, which is called "Japanese." The number that you should use depends upon the character and complexion required for the part you are

of your art, then yours is no love! And, feeling its impulse, you do not obey it in the face of everything, then yours is no art. For to every human heart I believe the love life to be supreme and important above all else. Once it is followed, if it is found that a "career" is interfered with, then that career should be abandoned. A career, after all, is little else than another form of love-life. For into it we pour whatever of creature force, tenderness and devotion there is in us.

If, when I marry, I find that I cannot concert-tour so well, I shall willingly abandon a part of my work temporarily. Frequently it is found that the first few years of marriage are apt to occasion this result, but later the career can be resumed without impairment to either it or the marriage. So many artists have done and are doing this and do not find that singing interferes with domestic life. More prominent prima donnas have been truly happily married than otherwise. To enumerate them would entail the compilation of a long list. I believe that any one of them would abandon her career in a twinkling if it became a question of choosing between that and her husband.

Thus, perhaps, I do give myself away. At any rate, I make manifest that the prima donna and the saleslady are "sisters under their skins." It is a home that we look forward to—both of us—with a good man and with kiddies. Nothing else seems to matter very much alongside of that. Through the glitter and glory of my place on high in the world of song I gaze longingly at the woman who has found that which I still seek. If I am never to find it, then when it comes to tally up the chart of our lives it will be she who has triumphed, for all her obscurity, and I who have lost, for all my fame. Incidentally, and while on the subject, I might take advantage of this opportunity to deny the recent rumored and written reports that I am married to Jascha Heifetz, the violinist. Mr. Heifetz has for years been one of my dearest personal friends, but nothing more. We had a great laugh when Town Topics first brought the current rumor to our attention.

So, you see, I'm not really a prima donna, after all. Just a girl!

Sophie Braslau's Story.

(Continued from First Page.)

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The Bright Side.

The tramp, who had been to the house prospecting, came out and joined his companion on the roadside. "What luck?" asked the waiting one. "None," growled the other. "I don't like this business of asking for bread and getting a stone."

"Well," said the first one in a tone of philosophic resignation and grim humor, "taint as bad as askin' for bread and getting a bulldog."

called upon to portray. For ordinary Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are preferable for women. Nos. 4, 5 and 6 for men, the most being decidedly character tints. After having used the flesh tints, which must be well and evenly spread, the application of cold cream being used in order to facilitate this, the shadows are next in order. The groundwork for these is laid on with a stick of light gray, which is covered with brown when a darker

with vaseline will suffice. If youth is required a small speck of carmine should be put in the inside corner of each eye. If, after having finished, you find that it is necessary to heighten the color, ordinary rouge can be used advantageously. An assortment set of grease paint colors sufficient for all purposes can be purchased at almost any drug store for \$1. Mustaches or beards can be procured ready-made. The man from whom you hire your wigs can supply you with these cheaper and better than you can make them yourself. If you wish to try your hand at making them yourself, crimped hair will be found best for all purposes. This hair comes in all shapes, and is applied with liquid glue or spirit gum. You will have to practice three or four times before you reach the necessary proficiency.

COLORED lights are often a necessity in a play and add much to the effectiveness of the scene. Material for them may be procured at a drug store. They should be burned in a tin

pan at the side of the stage, a polished reflector fitted to the pan casting the light in any desired direction. A simple bit of naturalness often goes far toward the success of a play. Bread actually toasted at a real fire, water boiled and tea made in sight of the audiences are slight touches, but they sometimes count for more than more pretentious ones.

Endeavor in your representation of any character to imagine what your own feelings would be under similar circumstances. Try to sink your identity and individuality in the part intrusted to you. If you are called upon to portray a product of the slums, remember that a concealment of the gaudy and politeness natural to you and your walks in life is necessary, and that you must bestow on your part the coarseness of its nature. Though this is but a frolic, this amateur affair, be sincere in your work, and you will find your pleasure increasing in proportion to the good work that you are doing. Above all things, be natural. That is the keynote of acting. If you are able to procure the services of a "coach," my advice to you is to follow his counsel. When you engage a coach you admit that you desire the service of some one who knows more about acting than you do, consequently you should be willing to be guided by the advice offered.

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shadow is required. The lines are also produced in the same manner. The red for the cheeks is blended. A small dab of red is first placed on the cheeks and then blended with the fingers until the proper effect is reached. This must be done before the shadows are laid in. The whole is then covered with powder (flesh-colored preferably), which is applied with a puff. The superfluous powder may then be dusted off with a hare's foot.

Next the eyelashes must be accentuated. If the character is a brunette, this should be done with black cosmetic, which, owing to its hardness, must first be heated and applied with pencil or stick. If, however, the player is of a lighter complexion, brown is used. The eyebrows are treated in the same manner. Next come the lips. Carmine rouge mixed

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conducting a most worthy "drive" to raise money for the stricken of Europe. "There've been so many, many drives," she complained, "and I've been unable to raise money enough to speak about, and we must close this week. It's dreadful. Won't you think up something bright at once that will get us some publicity?"

And having a heart, Mr. Armstrong Strayer did think of something that might persuade editors to give the cause a little space. He went to his office late that evening to dictate it to the machine before the ideas vanished from his mind. The office was closed, but he rummaged about to find some cylinders. He found one in the operator's desk and put it on his machine. He was about to talk into the mouthpiece when, to his astonishment, the cylinder began to talk. It said:

"One copy no carbon special white vellum bond Salutation My Darling Helen Paragraph A little poem of Rosettis' capital r-o-s-e-t-t-i apostrophe s which I read last night comma and which I want to whisper in your ear as my own words to you comma determined me to ask you comma without further delay comma to marry me period I know now that I have uttered u-n-u-t-t-e-r-a-b-l-e folly to try to go through life without you period I love you exclamation point dash love you underline the words exclamation point When will you marry me interjection point I have only a meager salary comma but Mr. Strayer once said I might hope to be taken into the firm period Please don't delay answering me double exclamation point"

Mr. Strayer heard the machine rasp at this point and presumed the message was finished, and smiled in great enjoyment. But in another moment a small voice came from the cylinder, which Mr. Strayer at once recognized: "No copy no carbon white vellum bond Salutation My Darling Helen Paragraph There is nothing in the world more beautiful to me to think of than for you and me to spend our lives together period I love you so much five asterisks that it hurts period You I will marry you whenever you feel you can period Under the circumstances comma I promise you I will manage on so economically period Now comma I'm going to send you kisses on this cylinder dash just listen carefully k-i-s-s-e-s—"

At this point, Mr. Strayer jumped up, shut off the machine and strode around the room. In a few moments he came back, saw that there was still space on the cylinder for further dictation, and then he spoke into the machine:

"Two copies and one carbon white vellum bond Mark one for Mister Candler and one for Miss Hathaway Give carbon to me for my files Salutation Bless you my children exclamation point"

point paragraph My apologies and congratulations on the same cylinder period I accidentally listened to this cylinder tonight while here to dictate a memorandum period I apologise period May you have a wonderful life together comma and I know you will period. Armstrong Strayer P S This will also serve as a memorandum that on September first we're going to incorporate this firm comma with you as vice president comma at fifty f-i-f-y per cent increase in your salary period Also I suggest you both take off August at full pay for a honeymoon period"

SEVERAL days later Miss Madden got from the boss a memo as to the spacing of vacations. He had marked himself down for July and made a notice that August was to be marked off for Mr. Candler and Miss Hathaway.

Miss Madden looked sharply at it and then called one of the girls. "Just look at this," she said. "Vacation for a whole month for Mr. Candler and Miss Hathaway at the same time? What is the boss up to, after we've been so faithfully putting obstacles in love's way?"

It being a crazy office, and it being tea time anyway, the girls went to Miss Hathaway's desk, where she was demurely typing.

"Why are you taking a whole month's vacation the same time that Mr. Candler is away?" they asked, eight pairs of eyes fastened on her. "Why, we're going to be married then," she said, lifting the ear pieces from her head, in her mouse-like way, as though it were the most natural of things to say.

"Married?" chorused the baffled girls, aghast—"married! Oh, what a pretty one on us! Oh! Oh!" Miss Madden kissed the girl, and the other girls followed suit. One of them was a bit impetuous and overturned a cylinder standing in its case on the desk. Miss Hathaway sprang forward with a little cry of concern, examined to see if it was broken, and tenderly tucked it in a drawer of her desk. The girls' eyes opened wide as saucers, as Miss Hathaway's face reddened guiltily. Four fingers pointed accusingly at the cylinder being tucked away. "It's his proposal!" they said, almost as one voice; and Miss Hathaway did not deny it.

Just then Mr. Candler came out of the office with more cylinders. "Will you join us at tea?" asked Miss Madden, precisely as of yore, with the full battery of eight females an attentive audience.

Mr. Candler looked at Miss Hathaway, squared his shoulders, and said in a distinctly new tone of voice entirely devoid of fear—"Certainly, in a few moments."

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Statistics Show Courtesy Is Not a Lost Art

BY MARSHALL NICHOLS.

IN the not-so-long-ago Washington enjoyed the reputation of being the most courteous city of its size in the United States. When directions were asked of the average pedestrian he not only gave them gladly and well, but, in most instances, volunteered to go at least part of the way with you, so that no possible mistake could be made. No woman ever stood in the street car or rode in elevators with behatted men. If you were jostled on the street your pardon was craved, not perfunctorily, but sincerely.

One of the most noticeable as well as the most unusual features of this city-wide pride in courtesy was that displayed by street car crews. Motor-men lifted the heavy market baskets on the front end. Conductors left their platform to help on the elderly person or lift the child. A supporting hand under the elbow steadied you when the car started suddenly.

On one of the suburban lines there was a diminutive guardian of the rear platform who never failed to greet you with a cheery "Good morning!" and who never failed to get one in return. His ready smile seemed to help you start the day right. His popularity was such that once, when he had gone afoul of a minor regulation and was dismissed, a petition was circulated and within the day had more than 300 names, asking his reinstatement, which, needless to say, was granted.

WHAT has become of this courtesy? Did we outgrow it? Are we too busy to be polite? Does it pay to spend valuable time being courteous? The answer comes from the biggest and busiest city in the world and says in no uncertain language that "civility is the best policy."

The Fifth Avenue Bus Company of New York recently received the following letter from one of its 150,000 daily passengers:

"I have just had a very exciting experience. I have ridden with probably the most courteous conductor living. Perhaps No. 648 was on his good behavior today. Perhaps some one had just left him some money. Perhaps he is very, very new and very, very green, and that accounts for his politeness. But let me tell you, it is a distinct novelty to be thanked when one pays one's fare!"

"I happened to be riding on the upper deck and No. 648 came up and announced to a shivering lady that there was just one seat inside if she cared to take it. At 45th street No. 648 thought of something else to do. He helped a lady and her small boy out of the bus, carried the boy in a jiffy over to the sidewalk and hopped on the bus again in less than no time. At 52nd street his remarkable conductor took out his watch and calculated just how long it would take a very agitated passenger to reach the Pennsylvania station and make his train."

"As I said, No. 648 probably hasn't been very long on the job. New York will probably 'get him' shortly. But when he gets too ambitious to be a

WASHINGTON Was Once "the Most Courteous City in the Country," But a New York Bus Line Now Claims Its Employees Have Attained High Standard—Growth of the Capital May Have Had Something to Do With Father Washington's Recent Lack of Courtesy.



WHEN CONDUCTORS LEFT THEIR PLATFORMS TO HELP PASSENGERS.

conductor, as of course he will, it would really give me a good deal of pleasure to try and locate this man where he could get ahead in the world. He is a rare specimen, believe me!"

But, according to the Fifth Avenue Bus Company, No. 648 is not "very, very new," nor is he a "rare specimen." He has been in service since 1917 and represents simply the type of conscientious, loyal, interested employee who has caught the spirit of that organization, the keynote of which is courtesy and service to its patrons.

NOR is the letter quoted at all unusual. Hundreds of similar letters have been received—the most unusual collection of letters, probably, that a transportation company has ever received.

The company keeps a complete record of the courtesy of each individual driver and conductor. A careful analysis recently made of these records shows the following results: Men courteous under all circumstances, 98 per cent; men irritable under great provocation, 1 1/2 per cent; men irritable under slight provocation, 1 1/2 per cent.

Among railway men it has almost become an axiom that winning the praise of the traveling public is the toughest job there is. At the same time, however, it is coming to be recognized as the most important single factor in successful management of a transportation company.

The carrying out of this policy of courtesy begins with the selection of employees. The standards are such that only one applicant out of five successfully passes the examination.

The majority of applicants are brought to the company by old employees and they are given preference. Former salesmen are given special preference.

Some kinds of work absolutely unfit an applicant to be trusted with a job where politeness and patience are demanded. The fact is interesting, in this connection, that a majority of the employees of the company are of Irish extraction, contrary to the generally accepted belief that members of that race are ready for a scrap at the drop of a hat.

Last August the company made a drive for "100 per cent civility" and asked the co-operation of the public. The entire month was designated "Civility month," with the announcement that the aim would be such courtesy as would bring not a single complaint of incivility during the period.

During the six months between January 1 and July 1 the buses carried 26,076,629 passengers. The total complaints of incivility received during this period numbered ninety-three. This makes one complaint for each 290,330 passengers carried.

SOME of the unusually interesting orders to employees of this company are such as these: "Frequently, things beyond our control will happen, which tend momentarily to disrupt schedules. This naturally causes inconvenience and annoyance to patrons. On such occasions, in answering inquiries as to the why and wherefore, inspectors, starters, drivers and conductors should take unusual pains in explaining fully all of the circumstances surrounding the delay or extended interval. Patrons are wholly within their rights when making such inquiries. It is not only our duty, but should be our pleasure, to see that they are at all times fully and correctly informed."

"Pennies are legal tender—accept them—make passenger believe that you enjoy taking them."

"Never enter into an argument or dispute with a patron. If you can do no good and may do a great deal of harm. Keep your wits and keep your temper. There is no better test of a gentleman."

"Neat personal appearance makes a most favorable impression upon patrons. Passengers naturally expect intelligent, courteous service from a neatly dressed man and are inclined to accord him the same sort of treatment they expect themselves. October last was the finest month in the history of the company, in so far as complaints of incivility were concerned. Only eight complaints were received from 4,500,000 passengers carried, or a ratio of one complaint for every 575,000 riders."

"Too busy to be polite" is the poorest business maxim imaginable. The bigger the business becomes the better it appreciates the commercial value of courtesy, and many of the largest have been built almost entirely on that theory.